2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

combined with the peculiar natural environment, has produced a material culture which contains many features of both these areas and which shows certain interesting local adaptations and modifications.

ENVIRONMENT.

The Washo territory lies partly on the western margin of the arid, Great Basin region of Nevada, and partly on the more densely wooded eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. It also extends up into the heavily timbered and well watered high Sierra region and even, in a small area on the headwaters of the Moquelumne, Calaveras, and Stanislaus rivers, reaches down for some distance on the western slope of this range.* Its western limit can, however, in general be stated as the crest of the Sierra Nevada range. Its eastern limit is, generally speaking, the low range between the Carson river and the Walker river drainages. Thus the territory of the Washo lies almost entirely on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, and extends out into the semi-arid eastern foothills of this range. The accompanying map shows these limits only approximately, as time did not permit a careful investigation of this subject.

Within this restricted territory are found two very distinct types of natural environment, each with its typical fauna and flora. The one, that of the semi-desert basin (plate II)[2]; the other, that of the well timbered and well watered Sierra (plate I).[3] The latter tends to produce features characteristic of the eastern part of the California culture area. The semi-arid sands of the eastern part of the Washo territory bear a flora characterized by low brush, various grasses which yield seeds used for food and, on the desert mountains, by a particular species of pine, the pifion, whose nuts constitute such an important article of food throughout much of the Great Basin culture area. The well watered mountains of the

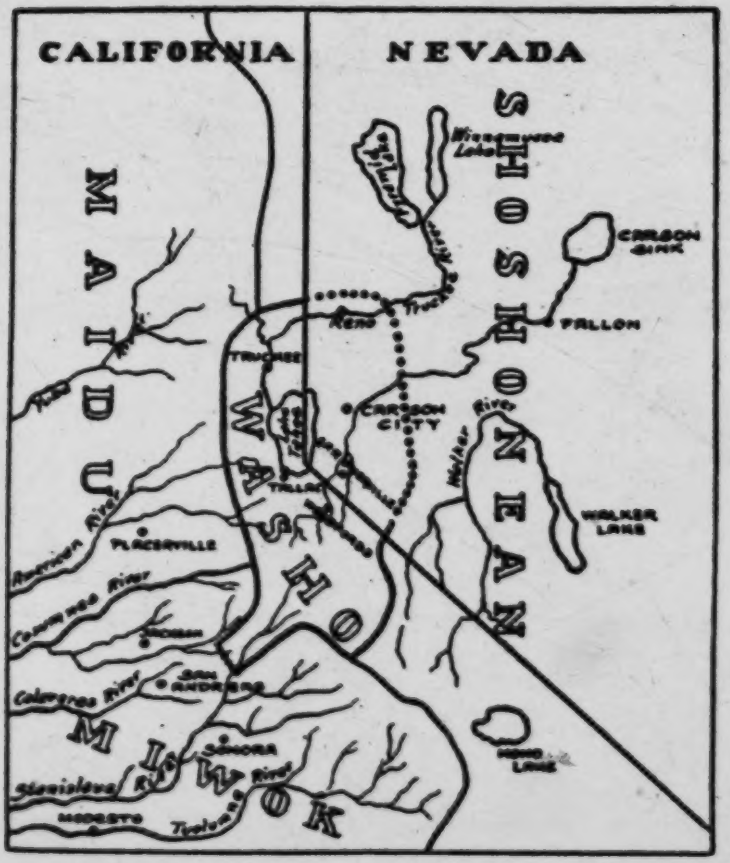
*See the author's "Geography and Dialects of the Miwok Indians," Univ. Calif. Publ., Am. Arch. Ethn. VI, 347 and map 3, 1908. Also Dixon's "The Northern Maidu," Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XVII, 128, and pl. XXXVIII, 1905.

[2] [The author may be referring to plate I, fig. 2 here, see cat. 116, p. 29 - An.]

[3] [See plate I, fig. 1, Cat. 116, p. 29 - An.]

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

The well watered mountains of the western part of the Washo territory produce a flora characterized by heavy forests of cedar, spruce, and several of the larger species of pine, and in its extreme western part by the presence of the



Map 1. Showing the Washo territory and that of surrounding tribes.

sequoia and the oak, whose acorns are used to some extent as food; thus introducing here a distinctly Californian element.

The fauna of the two sections presented, in primitive times, similar differences. That of the arid region was characterized

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

136 174 chiefly by the rabbit and various other small mammals; that of the Sierra region by larger mammals, such as the mountain sheep, deer, and bear.

● [133] Even in the arid section of this area there were fairly large streams fed by the melting snows of the high Sierra, and fish of various kinds were abundant. In fact fishing was a highly important vocation, even of the Paiute living over in the region still farther to the east, especially about Pyramid, Winnamucca, and Walker lakes. In the higher mountain section of the Washo country, notably at Lake Tahoe, fishing was, perhaps, the most important phase of this culture. The heavy snows made these higher altitudes undesirable for winter residence, but the Indians spent much time there during the summer months, attracted especially by the abundance of lake trout.

[226] [132] [221]

101 174 177 Of the two environments of the Washo, that of the arid Great Basin rather predominated, which fact, combined with the facility of communication and the consequently more frequent association of the Washo with their eastern neighbors than with those to the west, produced a culture in which Great Basin features are somewhat in the ascendancy. However, there are many features of the Washo culture which are very similar to those of the Miwok and Maidu of the California area.

[171]

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

177 182 Since the coming of the whiteman and the consequent dispossession of the Indians, the social system of the Washo has been largely disrupted. The following outline of their social organization, therefore, depicts the aboriginal condition of the Washo, though at the present time no villages in the old sense remain, and chieftainship is largely nominal.

621 [594] The social organization of the Washo is primarily based upon the family unit. The village community is the largest division and each village is entirely distinct from all the others. Apparently there is no approach to a tribal organization, though this exists among the tribes immediately to the east.

[619]

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

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EXPLANATION OF PLATE I.

Figure 1. The southern shore of Lake Tahoe and the mountains to the southeast, showing the heavily timbered and well watered high Sierra region.

Figure 2. The Sierra Nevada region at Woodfords, California. This is the eastern limit of the Sierra region and near the border of the semi-desert Great Basin area.

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

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[P. 29]

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

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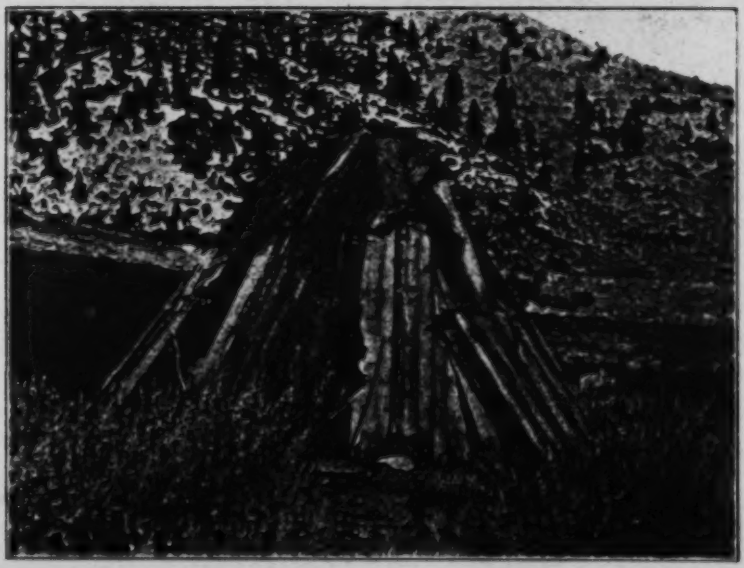

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[P.31]

5:Kroeber E-5 (no date) 1925 NT20 Washo NT20

CHAPTER 38.

THE WASHO.

Affiliations, 569; habitat, 569; numbers, 570; culture, 571; basketry, 571; dress and implements, 572; buildings, 572; religion and society, 573.

AFFILIATIONS.

The Washo have been unduly neglected by students of the Indian. What little is on record concerning them makes it difficult to place them.

Their speech, which is rather easy to an English tongue and pleasant to the ear, is distinctive and very diverse from that of the Shoshonean Mono and Northern Paiute with whom they are in contact and association. Such investigation as has been made—and it has not gone very deep—points to the Washo language as being Hokan and therefore no longer to be regarded as an independent stock. Still the affiliation with other Hokan languages can not be close. The position of the Washo makes this comparative distinctness remarkable. For a detached and quasi-independent little group the Washo are on the wrong side of the Sierra. Diversity is the true Californian habit. The moment the Plateau is entered single dialects stretch for monotonous hundreds of miles, and the basic Shoshonean tongue continues without interruption across the Great Basin and even over the Rockies. Now the Washo are a Basin tribe. Their settlements were all on streams that flow eastward to be lost in the interior desert. Even as the artificial lines of statehood run they are as much a Nevadan as a Californian people. Their anomaly as a separate fragment is therefore in their location.

It is tempting to conjecture, accordingly, and especially on the basis of their probable Hokan kinship, that they are an ancient Californian tribe, which has gradually drifted, or been pressed, over the Sierra. But there are no concrete grounds other than speech to support such an assumption.

HABITAT.

The Washo territory is the upper and more fertile drainage of the Truckee and Carson Rivers—streams born in California mountains to perish in Nevada sinks. How far down they ranged on these

5:Kroeber E-5 (no date)1925 NT20 Washo NT20

two rivers has not been ascertained with accuracy. It seems to have been but a little below Reno and Carson City. Long Valley Creek, which drains northwestward into Honey Lake, a Californian stream, was also in their possession. West of the crest of the Sierra they had no settlements, but the Miwok acknowledged their hunting rights on the upper Stanislaus nearly as far down as the Calaveras Big Trees. They may have enjoyed similar privileges elsewhere. Where there are no winter villages, information is often conflicting: boundaries may have been in dispute, or amicably crossed. If the Washo hunted on the North Stanislaus they may have come down the Middle Fork also, or frequented the Calaveras, Cosumnes, or American. Sierra Valley has been assigned both to them and the northeastern Maidu. The deep snows prevented more than temporary occupation. Honey Lake, too, may have been more largely Washo than the map (Pl. 46) shows, or entirely forbidden to them.

Lake Tahoe is central to Washo territory, and was and is still resorted to in summer, but its shores are scarcely habitable in the season of snow.

The Washo call themselves Washiu or Wasiu. The names applied to them by their neighbors are unknown, except for northern Maidu Tsaisuma or Tsaisil. Northern Miwok Hisatok or Histoko means merely "easterners."

The Washo were at times in conflict with the adjacent Northern Paiute, whom they call Paleu, and by whom they are said to have been defeated about 1860.

NUMBERS.

There are the usual statements, some made as much as 50 years ago, about enormous decrease and degeneration or impending extinction; but actually the Washo seem to have suffered less diminution as a consequence of the invasion of our civilization than the vast majority of California Indians. Estimates of their population were: In 1859, 900; 1866, 500; 1892, 400; 1910, 300. The Federal census in this last year enumerated over 800, about one-third in California and two-thirds in Nevada, some three-fourths or more being full blood. As the Washo are distinctly separated from the "Paiutes" and the "California Diggers" in the local American consciousness, it is not likely that this figure involves any erroneous inclusions of consequence. Their lack of any reservation, and the semiadjustment of their life to civilized conditions, leading to a scattering habitation on the fringes of white settlements, have evidently caused a persistent underestimation of their numbers.

Their original strength may have been double what it is to-day; 1,500 or under seems a likely figure in view of the nature of their country, their solidarity, and their unity of speech.

[this plate has not been processed] --Analyst

13
The physical environment of Washo territory is marked by its variety of terrain, climate, flora, and fauna, primarily due to variations in altitude 133 within a comparatively small area. The Sierra Nevada rises gradually to the east of the central valley of California from near sea level to peaks over 10,000 feet in altitude, then it drops abruptly on the eastern slope to about 361 5,000 feet. Generally the Washo lived at 4,500 to 5,500 feet in the valleys 133 east of the Sierra Nevada; around 5,500 to 7,500 in the highlands; and their treks took them down to 3,000 feet on the west side of the Sierra. This gave them a wide range of habitats in mountain-valley terrain.

132 The highlands and western slopes had yellow pine, fir, and hemlock [137] vegetation; a transitional and boreal life zone; humid mesothermal and microthermal climates; and zones receiving between 10 to 60 inches of annual precipitation. In the mountains the summers are warm, with rains through July. Snows start in November, followed by cold weather with freezing nights until April.

[137] In the lowlands to the east of the Sierra Nevada the Washo had pinon and juniper vegetation, an upper sonoran life zone, and an arid-cold-steppe [241] climate (Elsasser 1960, 3-6). These areas have 100-140 days of growing season and all farming requires irrigation (Department of Economic Development n.d.). The weather station at Minden, Nevada is 4,730 feet above sea level. It has recorded an annual precipitation of 8.73 inches, an average growing season of 144 days from May 29 to September 20, a high maximum temperature of 109° F. and a low maximum of -24° F.

Throughout Washo territory the average variability of annual precipitation is around 20-25%. In the months of December through February 60-70% of possible sunshine is received and the figure is 80-90% in the months of June through August.

433 The mountains and lakes (especially Lake Tahoe), the high percentage of [457] sunny days, and legalized gambling in Nevada make tourism the major industry [233] in Washo territory today. Cattle raising and dairying are the most important [234] agrarian industries. Lumbering and mining are of minor importance (Department of Economic Development n.d.).

[315] Compared with other tribes in the Great Basin the Washo occupied a very [36] abundant environment. Hamilton described the Truckee River country in 1844 [161] as "a hunter's paradise, with the streams full of fish and blue grouse in every [?] direction" (Sieber 1951, 162). This abundance is reflected in the fact that the Washo had a higher population density than any other Great Basin tribe. Kroeber (1947, 137) gives a figure for the Washo that comes out as 2.4 square miles per person. The average population density for all of the Great Basin was roughly 15 square miles per person (Steward 1938, 46).

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lowest level of a seven point scale of culture for native North America.

Trade, warfare, and communication provide the avenues for cultural diffusion. If these avenues of communication lead to technologically advanced cultures, we can expect economic development even if custom is sanctified and the force of tradition is great. The greatest barrier to Washo economic development seems to have been their isolated territorial location. They were isolated from the surrounding high cultures in the Southwest, California, and the Northwest Coast. Barriers to trade were discussed above (pp. 50-51): mountain terrain, language differences, climatic extremes, lack of significant tradeable surpluses, location of sufficient resources within Washo territory, and inter-tribal hatreds. These barriers to trade were also barriers to economic development in that lines of diffusion remained weak.

433 439 177 [133] [628]

Washo society was neither inventively productive nor absorptive. It does not appear to represent a focal point for the development of any new and more efficient solutions to the problems of survival. It appears rather, to have developed from big game hunting to a slightly more efficient base of hunting, fishing, and gathering. This development may have derived from the influence of Shoshoneans. More efficient techniques of gathering and storing fish might have raised their economy to the level of most Californians. Even in historic times the Washo have been slow in adopting agriculture and animal husbandry.

433 178 [177]

Manning Nash (Adams, et al, n.d., 23) suggested that the household was not a very viable unit for economic expansion "because it is such a multifunctional unit." Unlike the modern business firm, the household has many non-economic functions which conflict with its economic functions. This multifunctional character was present in all Washo socioeconomic groups.

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The fact that the Washo did survive in their environment with a simple technology attests to the culture's efficiency and viability. We simply raise the question of why they did not develop a more advanced economy and suggest that the kind of economy they had, with little inter-tribal trade and an orientation to the household, was a barrier to this development.

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Prestige Economy and Money

The concept of a "prestige economy" came into use after DuBois (1936, 80) defined the economic involvement in acquiring prestige among the Paiute-Tututni. She defined prestige economy as "a series of social prerogatives

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PLATE I

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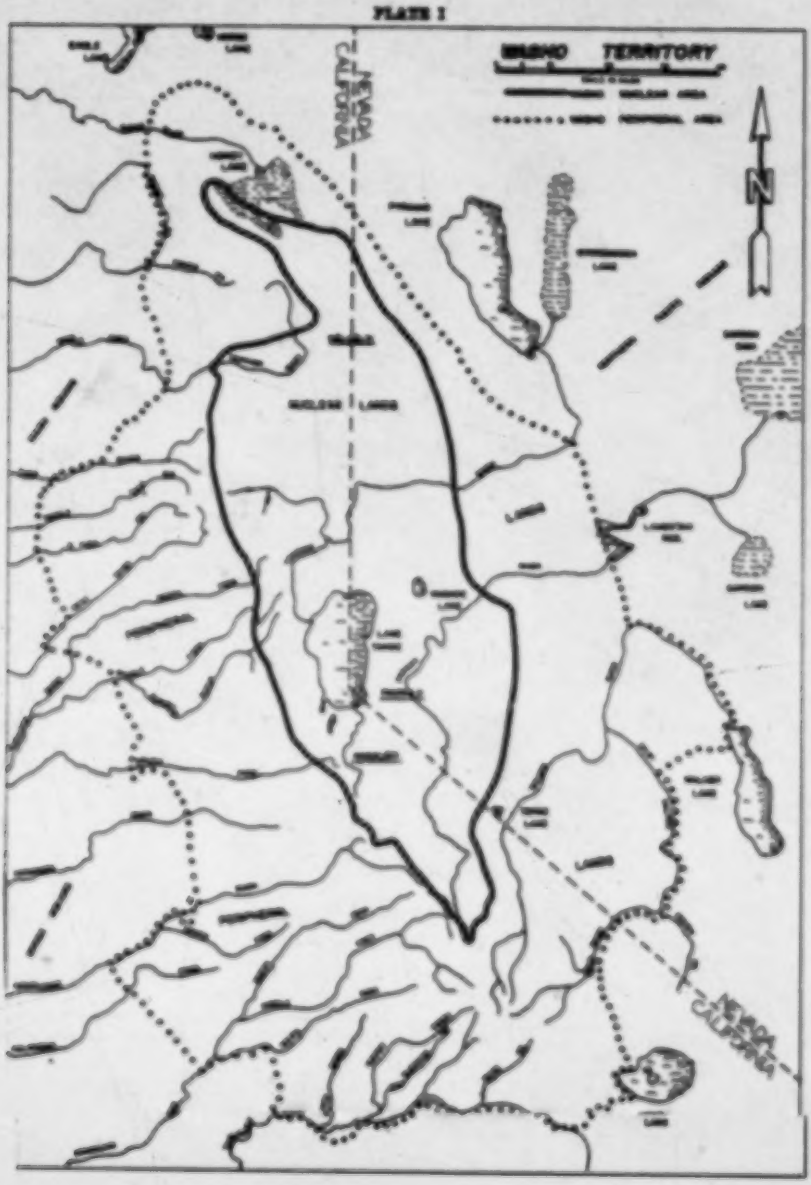

[End Plate I]

WASHO PREHISTORY: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

by John A. Price

Anthropological research dealing with the Washo Indians and their aboriginal territory has produced a considerable body of descriptive data, much of it amassed in the past decade. This paper will review that portion of the data pertaining to prehistory in Washo territory. 1

Washo territory in the middle 1800's centered on Lake Tahoe in California and Nevada and the areas immediately to the north, east and south. Except for occasional wider ranging for gathering or trade, Washo territory extended from the south shore of Honey Lake south to Sonora Pass and the West Walker River in California. East to west their territory extended from the Pinenut Mountains in Nevada to several miles west of the main crest of the Sierra Nevada in California.

The physical environment of Washo territory is marked by its variety of climate, flora and fauna resulting from the variations in altitude which occur within a comparatively small area. The Sierra Nevada, a great tilted block, rises gradually to the east of the central valley of California from near sea level to peaks over 10,000 ft. in altitude and drops abruptly on its eastern slope in Nevada to around 5,000 ft. in elevation.

The Washo territory is characterized by yellow pine and fir vegetation in the highlands and by pinyon and juniper in the lowlands, ranging through Boreal, Transitional and Upper Sonoran life zones. A humid microthermal climate with 20 to 35 in. of precipitation annually obtains in the mountains while an arid cold-steppe climate is found in the low valleys. In the mountains the summers are warm with rains through July, snows starting in November, and cold weather with freezing nights until April. Snow often reaches more than 15 ft. in depth in some places in the mountains.

There are several estimates of Washo population. Fairfield (1916, 13-14) wrote that "In 1859 Major Dodge, the Indian Agent, reported that they number about 900"; Kroeber (1925, 944) estimated around 1500 for A.D. 1770; Lowie (1939, 301) wrote that "recent figures indicate approximately 300"; and Merriam and d'Azevedo (1957, 615) wrote that "Present population is variously reported at between 400 and 1000 individuals; the figures on file at the Nevada Indian Agency in Stewart, Nevada, support the larger estimates."

1 [for an additional note regarding the preparation of this paper, see p. 92 -- Analyst]

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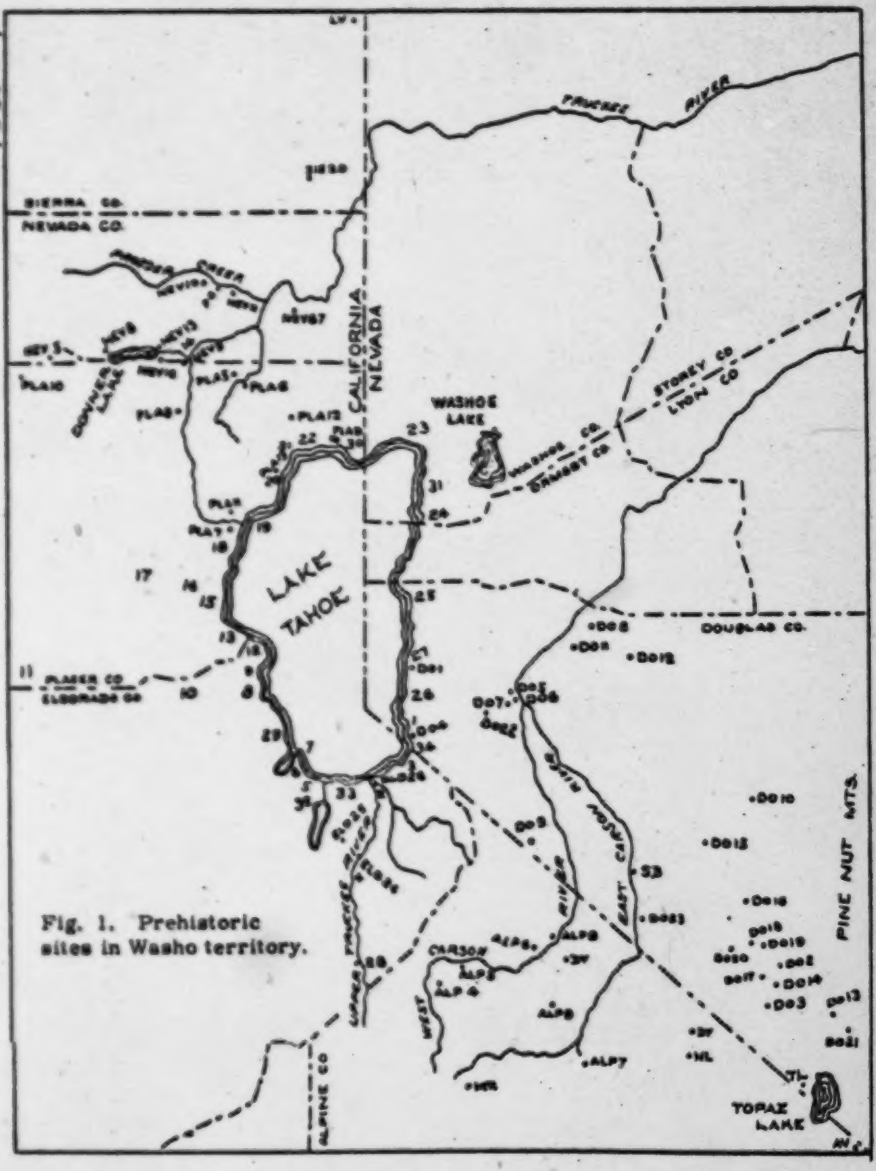

Fig. 1. Prehistoric sites in Washo territory.

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secure and prepare these (hooked pole, roasting of nuts, carrying baskets); mano and metate; twined basketry techniques and basket form (e.g., winnowing trays); temporary brush house; antelope hunting method by 'charming'; private ownership of clumps of pinon trees."

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[172] Washo winter use of the highlands had been of research interest in recent years. In an archeological survey report Heizer and Elsasser (1953, 18) state that "permanent occupation at elevations over 5500 feet in prehistoric times would be hazardous or impossible." Continuing the project,
[133] Elsasser (1960, 26) considered 4000 ft. the approximate dividing line between summer and winter habitation for the California side, and he stated that "in aboriginal times . . . little or no land, even at the highest elevations was unknown to the Indians." From ethnographic evidence Freed (1954, 1) stated in reference to Lake Tahoe (6275 ft. elevation), that "if there was to be no pine nut crop, a family might choose to winter at the lake."

172

The Freed Survey of Lake Tahoe

[114] Freed (1954) conducted a survey of Washo habitation sites in the Lake
[124] Tahoe area by interrogation of Washo informants. The map accompanying the present paper gives the location of sites discussed and mapped by Freed. The sites are numbered 1 through 31, (see note 2 for further discussion of the map).

[317] Freed's site #6 is a deposit of red clay near the lake; #10 is at
[312] Rubicon Springs (the mineral water of which was used for internal disorders), which was on a trade route into central California; #16 is a cave at the foot of Stanford Rock where hunters sometimes stayed; #17 is a camp among oak trees; #27 (26-Do-1) is the cave at Cave Rock used for shelter; and #29, #30 and #31 were resting places rather than campsites. The rest of the sites were used primarily in connection with fishing, although hunting and gathering were additional considerations. Freed (1954) says:

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[221]

> "The Washo spent the summer months fishing in the streams around the lake, each family moving to another river whenever it saw fit but usually confining itself to a particular section of the lake's perimeter . . . the camps were usually in open spaces close to the lake shore. . . . A camp might consist of five or six circular windbreaks (gado), each housing a family.

[342]

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20 ●

Map. 1. Aboriginal linguistic areas and peyotist villages. Numbers indicate sequence of communities receiving peyote.